



SCHOOL BUS, INC.

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DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION "POINT OF CONTACT" **AUGUST 2008 NEWSLETTER**

TTT Class Has Concluded

We have received a number of complements concerning the material for the school bus training this year. There were about 45 TTT this year trained in Sioux Falls, Pierre and Rapid City.

Training Classes Scheduled Around the State

The following link is to a PDF file that has all of this summer current training dates listed. You may have to copy this link and paste it in your web search window.

<http://doe.sd.gov/oatq/transportation/docs/2008%20BUS%20DRIVER%20TRNG%20ANNOUNCEMENT.pdf>

No Child Left Behind

The above headline has a different meaning in this case. I just returned from the National School Transportation Association meeting. In one of the sessions it was mentioned that Nationally there is approximately 5,000 children annually left on the bus at the end of a route where the driver failed to check his/her bus for sleeping children. This is a real concern and everyone needs to put a policy and rules in place to make sure this does not happen to you! It was also mentioned that this happens most to very good drivers and long term drivers who get complacent in their duties and forget to check on occasion.

Some Other Notes From the National Meeting

The final rule from National Highway Traffic and Safety Administration on new updates on school buses will be required should be done by the end of 2008. We already expect to see the "New York seat back" which will increase the current seat back by six inches. Small type class "A" buses under 10,000 GVWR will be required to have three point seat belts. I'm sure there will be more changes also.

Federal Motor Carrier Safety Administration is working on the final rules concerning the Hours of Service. They mentioned that bus operations sometimes get lumped into the trucking companies because nationally there are about 700,000 trucking companies and only about 4700 bus companies. FMCSA said they are looking at both sides and trying to be fair to both. It is still undecided if the trucking companies will go back to the 10-hour rule or remain on the 14-hour rule. The same applies to the busing companies. We could remain at the 10 hour or be changed to the 14-hour rule. This should come out by late fall this year.

In another session we heard about considering an Anti-Idling Policy. It was mentioned that if all of the 60,000 school buses in the USA could reduce their idle time by 30 minutes per day there would be a cost savings of twelve million dollars. I have attached a sample policy. If need be you can make changes to fit your school or company.

Purpose:

It is the policy of <name of school/company> to eliminate all unnecessary idling by school buses, thereby reducing exposure by school children to the harmful diesel exhaust fumes.

Rationale:

Diesel exhaust poses a serious health risk to children, bus drivers, and the general community. Children are especially vulnerable to the effects of diesel exhaust. Diesel exhaust can accumulate in and around school buses and cause lung damage and respiratory problems as well as exacerbating asthma and allergies. Exposure may also impair a child's learning abilities. Unnecessary idling contributes to Pennsylvania's over reliance on imported petroleum and wastes financial resources.

Applicability: This policy applies to the operation of all district-owned and/or contracted school buses.

Control Measures:

1. Upon arrival to school loading zone, drivers will turn off engine and not restart until time to depart. Should weather conditions necessitate idling the bus, idling will be minimized and will take place outside the student loading zone. The bus will then pull in as close to pick-up time as possible, turn off engine, load students, and restart. See Cold Weather Provisions below.
2. In colder weather, schools will provide a space for bus drivers who arrive early to wait inside the school.
3. At depots, warm-up idling will be limited to what the school bus manufacturers recommend (usually 3-5 minutes).
4. Buses will not idle while waiting for students on field trips, events, or any trips off school grounds.
5. Loading zone, when feasible, will be located at least 100 feet from air intakes, doors, and windows of the school building. When this is not possible, school personnel will take steps to limit air intake during loading and unloading times.
6. When possible, buses will use a diagonal parking pattern with the front end towards the school entrance rather than the typical nose-to-tail pattern.
7. When possible, Transportation Operations staff will revise bus schedules to avoid school bus caravanning and will assign the cleanest buses to the longest routes.
8. Service and delivery vehicles will not idle in school zone. In instances where idling is necessary to facilitate delivery (such as oil delivery), deliveries will be scheduled before or after school hours.
9. All bus drivers and delivery companies will receive notification of this policy at the beginning of each school year. "No-Idling Zone" signs will be placed in visible locations.

Cold Weather Provisions:

1. If the outside temperature is between 32 degrees and -10 degrees Fahrenheit, idling to operate heaters is allowed for up to 15 minutes.
2. If the outside temperature is below -10 degrees Fahrenheit, there is no time restriction on idling to use heating equipment.

FMCSA Warns Against Chantix

Chantix, the smoking cessation aid, is the latest drug to be banned by the FMCSA for pilots and air traffic controllers. The FMCSA advised medical examiners "to not qualify anyone currently using this medication for commercial motor vehicle licenses". The drug has been linked to seizures, dizziness, heart irregularities, diabetes, and thoughts of suicide and depression.

FTA Warns Transits Not to Rely on Rochester

On May 19, the Federal Transit Administration published a Notice of Proposed Policy regarding school bus operations and tripper service. This action is in response to the ruling of the District Court in Rochester, in which the Court overruled FTA's determination that the Rochester-Genesee Regional Transit Authority was in violation of the regulations prohibiting transit agencies from providing school bus service. In the notice, FTA says that it will respect the court's decision in the Western District of New York, but for agencies in the rest of the country, it wants to resolve "conflicting issues between FTA's school bus operations policy and the Court's decision." FTA explains in the notice that the original tripper service exemption allowed transit agencies to accommodate students only through fare modifications and subsidies. But through the years, administrative and judicial decisions have broadened the scope of tripper service to include "essentially any modifications." The Rochester Court ruled that because a hypothetical member of the public could technically board any of RGRTA's 240 school bus routes, they are legitimate tripper service. FTA intends to interpret tripper service more narrowly. It would allow transits to (1) utilize various fare collections or subsidy systems, (2) modify the frequency of service, and (3) make minor route deviations from existing route paths in the immediate vicinity of schools to stops located at or in close proximity to the schools. FTA also intends to re-interpret "exclusive" school bus operations. The Rochester Court interpreted "exclusive" very broadly in determining that since it is theoretically possible for a non-student to ride the bus—even if none ever does so—the service is not exclusive. FTA's proposed interpretation of "exclusive" is "any service that a reasonable person would conclude primarily was designed to accommodate students and school personnel, and only incidentally to serve the nonstudent general public." FTA believes that this interpretation would allow it to implement "the express intent of Congress, which is, to prevent unfair competition between federally funded grantees and private school bus operators." FTA expects to issue an expedited NPRM to provide clearer definitions of "tripper service" and "school bus operations," as well as generally to update the existing school bus regulation. In the meantime, it is requesting comments on the proposed interpretations, NSTA will submit comments, and will continue working with FTA to strengthen the school bus regulations. You can access the Notice and submit comments at www.regulations.gov. Enter Docket ID FTA-2008-0015.